



Winter 2012

Vol. 21 No. 2

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Muriel's Musings on Her Norway Adventure

Muriel Thompson (MWP Director)

Center for Writing, University of Minnesota

In the wake of the disappointing loss of federal funding, MWP received a wonderful invitation from Sør-Trøndelag University College (HiST), located in Trondheim, Norway, to collaborate with the Norwegian National Center for Writing Education and Research (Skrivesenteret), which is hosted by HiST. The Center works with classroom approaches, learning strategies, and forms of assessment in order to improve the teaching of writing in kindergarten and primary, secondary, adult, and teacher education. How this invitation came about is quite interesting.

Two years ago Anne Andersen (ISI 1991), then the principal of Trondheim International School, encouraged us to invite Cherise Storlie-Kristoffersen, a teacher at the school, to attend our Invitational Summer Institute as an international guest. Cherise attended the 2010 ISI and then returned to Trondheim, where she is a doctoral student at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology and is employed at HiST, working at the National Center for Writing.

In Trondheim, Cherise was asked to present her MWP experiences during a workshop for National Center for Writing and HiST staff. This mini-seminar sparked a heightened awareness of and desire to learn more about the MWP, its goals, and



(from left) Anne Andersen, Kirsten Jamsen, Cherise Storlie-Kristoffersen, Debra Hartley, and Muriel Thompson

its mission. As a result, Cherise, Synnøve Matre (the project coordinator), and HiST faculty applied for and secured a grant from the Norwegian government for Writing Education in Teacher Education through *Project Funds for North America 2011*. Funding from this grant covered the travel expenses (flight and lodging) for Kirsten Jamsen, Debra Hartley, and me to visit Trondheim this fall to share ideas about the teaching of writing, support for teachers of writing, and research into the teaching of writing. Our visit provided a common language to further our partnership, build upon the strengths of each institution, and lay the foundation for creating a successful Norwegian model of the Minnesota Writing Project.



Main building at Sør-Trøndelag University College in Trondheim

The goals within the first year of the collaboration are to conduct initial site visits at HiST and the U of M to learn about the similarities and differences between teacher education and how the teaching of writing is addressed within teacher education in each country. The MWP goals that HiST plans to focus on are

- To establish and sustain a network of teachers who write, teach, and learn with other teachers
- To support teachers as writers and researchers
- To develop and disseminate best practices in the teaching of 21st century literacies
- To strengthen collaboration between higher education and school districts

Since I can't possibly share our entire trip with you, here are a few highlights:



Trondheimsfjord

Thursday—Once we arrived in Trondheim, Cherise whisked us off to her home for a typical Norwegian meal, including *sodd* (a meatball, potato, and carrot soup)—very tasty. She and her husband, Oyvind, and three children live on a family farm about 30 miles from Trondheim. After this fantastic meal, we picked up Anne Andersen from the airport. Cherise took a scenic route from the airport to our hotel so that we could view the beautiful countryside.

Trondheim is situated on the largest fjord in Norway, and we were treated to amazing views as we navigated the drive. Just as Cherise was beginning the ascent up a rather steep hill, her car lost power, and it appeared that we might end up stranded by the side of the road with a car full of luggage and six jetlagged passengers. She turned the car off and started again—it kicked in!

Friday—Our own personal taxi driver, Cherise, picked us up at the hotel and drove us to the College where we met the staff of the National Center for Writing.

We spent the morning learning about the Center's history and responsibilities, the various programs they are currently involved in, and background information about Norwegian educational policies and standards. Then we were treated to lunch (complete with tasty introductions to Norwegian foods). The afternoon began with a toast for the group, not just to welcome us, but also to celebrate a research project which just gained fantastic funding.



Our warm welcome, with a choir serenading us with several songs



Where we stayed at Bortistu

I was amazed at the warmth of our reception, and certainly didn't need to be concerned about our communicating with the Norwegians. They are very fluent in English and slip into speaking it whenever necessary.

Saturday/Sunday—Cherise arranged a trip to the mountains to provide even more opportunities to enjoy the countryside and to do some mountain hiking. We stayed at Bortistu, a farm nestled at the base of a mountain ridge about 80 miles south of Trondheim, where

our group was lodged in a charming house built in 1648. On the way back to Trondheim we traversed the countryside, enjoying some majestic waterfalls.



Waterfall in Norway

Monday—This was our first day to visit schools. First we observed a 3rd grade at Charlottenlund Elementary School (1st-7th), where three teachers were using teaching stations for guided reading and writing. As we observed, a very confident boy approached me saying in English, "Hi, I am Noah. What is your name?" He then proceeded to introduce himself to each of us. We were also treated to one of the teachers playing his guitar while his students sang for us.



3rd grade class at Charlottenlund elementary school

Next we headed to Charlottenlund Middle School (8th-10th) to meet the principal, who shared his strong educational philosophy of developing independent learners. I found this school extremely interesting. Students entering the 8th grade stay with the same team of teachers all three years. They follow an educational plan that emphasizes developing students who are "teachers" by the 10th grade: in 8th they learn; in 9th they practice; in 10th they teach. I was impressed by the student independence I observed and the absence of security. Students are expected to be quite independent (and they rise to that expectation). Student council officers took us on a tour of their school and shared information about their classes with us.

From here we raced to our scheduled tour of Nidarosdomen (Nidaros Cathedral), the oldest cathedral in Norway, built around 1000—an amazing structure with a rich history. Kirsten and I followed this by meeting with HiST faculty advisors who want to create more opportunities for their students to study at the U of M.

Tuesday—We started sharing ideas about recruiting and sustaining a writing project with the staff of the Center. It was quite overwhelming to try to share 20+ years of



Student council officers, Charlottenlund middle school

experience in about an hour's discussion. However, I am excited about the future for this Center. I believe it could easily expand and develop much like the National Writing Project, which started in California and now has sites across the nation. Later in the day Kirsten shared information about our Center for Writing (C4W) at the University of Minnesota, focusing on our **Teaching with Writing** program. Many of the HiST faculty would like to have such support. Debra and Kirsten stayed to demonstrate a writing consultation with a class of education students. Meanwhile I headed back to the Charlottenlund elementary school with Cherise and Anne for a staff meeting. Working closely in an extended staff development project in this school, Cherise shared a 6-traits lesson on organization that included a fun activity using the book *Zoom*. Then Anne shared a couple of ideas—a matchbook on weather and companion books from her school in Methow Valley, Washington. In exchange, several of the Norwegian teachers displayed examples of books that their students had published.



Kirsten presenting, with sign-language interpreter

Wednesday—We visited Trondheim Katedralskole (grades 11, 12, and 13), the oldest high school in Norway, which is very prestigious and difficult to get into. This school dates back to about 1000 and has several distinguished alumni (including kings). Very interesting to me again was the lax supervision and monitoring atmosphere. Students appear to be very responsible and accountable for making decisions. At this school we visited one class, in which we were asked if we would be willing to answer students' questions. Of course we were delighted to accommodate this request. The class consisted of about thirty grade 11 students. They were extremely interested in what a typical day would be like in our schools. Many of them will spend a year attending a school outside of Norway.

The evening was a dinner at Cherise's home with HiST colleagues. Her culinary skills didn't disappoint! She put together a wonderful mixture of Minnesotan and Norwegian dishes, including wild rice soup, salmon, lamb, scalloped potatoes and corn, apple crisp and lingonberries.

Thursday—This very full day started with us meeting the Dean of HiST. We visited and shared about the Center and MWP. Then we gathered with Center staff to discuss ideas for future networking and launching their MWP-like initiative. In the afternoon about twenty teachers attended a mini-seminar that I presented on Writing to Learn. It was amazing to observe their ability to write and communicate in two languages so fluently. The day culminated with a dinner at Synnøve's home—another example of the gracious entertaining that we received while in Norway. The evening was filled with warm conversation and even a song that the Norwegians all know and sing to their children as a lullaby.



Discussion in the National Center for Writing office

Friday—An unbelievable day! We began with sharing and brainstorming possible future connections. What was first thought of as an extension of MWP has grown into possibilities of connecting more with C4W and writing support for staff.

Lunch was again a very festive occasion, complete with candelabra and Norwegian delicacies. Candles often decorated the homes we visited, perhaps warding off the darkness of fall.

We were treated to a musical blessing before the meal. We found ourselves laughing and communicating much more openly. In one week's time we had become very comfortable with one another. From the opening day's lunch to this closing day's lunch, we had shared many ideas and come to realize the similarity of our educational goals. We used the **6-word memoir strategy** to share final thoughts. Mine was, "Far reaching dreams now become reality!" In the final moments, they presented each of us with a gift as a reminder of our visit. As we left the Center, we shared hugs and promises of continuing our work together.



Festive final lunch

Tusen takk (a thousand thanks) for this marvelous opportunity!



Nidaros Cathedral

Looking forward, this coming March three staff members from HiST, Cherise Storlie-Kristoffersen, Synnøve Matre, and Torunn Klemp, will visit the University of Minnesota's Center for Writing to learn more about how C4W and MWP programs support writing and writing instruction here in Minnesota. We plan to offer several events that should enable our HiST guests to observe and participate in appropriate programs and to connect with relevant experts at the University. In addition to attending our 2011 Invitational Summer Institute Follow-up Retreat, they will visit some individual classes, both at the University and MWP Teacher Consultant schools. The K12 visits will probably take place on Thursday, March 1; Monday, March 5; and Tuesday, March 6.

On Friday, March 2, the Teaching with Writing program will sponsor an Engaging Controversies discussion, "Everybody's Second Language? Cross-Cultural and Multilingual Perspectives on Academic Writing," in which our Norwegian guests will join us for a rich discussion exploring how we teach writing in English and other languages in an increasingly global world. For more information on time, location, and registration, go to the **University of Minnesota Events Calendar**.

Please let us know if you would like to open your classroom to our visitors from Norway; this will be our opportunity to show them "Minnesota Nice"!

Contact us at MWP@umn.edu

Open to all interested educators!

Minnesota Writing Project & Minnesota Department of Education
Offer
Saturday Session Workshops

Exploring Successful Strategies
for Writing:
ELA Standards in Action

January 21

Focus:
How to best support explanatory/
informative writing

All sessions will address research, digital writing and struggling writers.

February 11

Focus:
How to expand writing options for argumentative/persuasive texts with special emphasis on writing in social studies, science, and technical subjects

March 31

Focus:
How to weave narrative, poetry, multigenre writing into academic texts

FOR MORE INFORMATION:
Minnesota Writing Project
Phone: 612-625-6323
Email: mwp@umn.edu

PLACE: Minnesota Department of Education
Conference Center A
1500 Highway 36 West
Roseville, MN 55113
Time: 9:00 a.m. –12:30 p.m.
coffee and bagels

Cost: \$45 per session CEUs available Graduate Credit Option

Registration Deadline: Check with MWP
Mail to: Minnesota Writing Project, U of M, 10 Nicholson Hall, 216 Pillsbury Drive, S.E., Minneapolis, MN 55455

Name _____ Email _____
School/District _____ Phone _____
Home Address _____ City, State, Zip _____
Courses/Grades Taught _____ **Make checks payable to: University of Minnesota**

\$45 per session Jan. 21 _____ Feb. 11 _____ Mar. 31 _____ Amount enclosed: \$ _____

News from Chicago: The National Writing Project and Competitive Federal Funding

Kirsten Jamsen (MWP Co-Director)

Center for Writing, University of Minnesota

At this year's Annual Meeting in Chicago, Candance Doerr-Stevens and I had many opportunities to talk with National Writing Project (NWP) leaders and learn more about how our national organization is adapting to the profound budget changes in Washington DC. The main message was twofold: We must continue our efforts 1) to compete for federal funding, and 2) to ramp up our fundraising efforts.

As you know, in 2010 Congress eliminated from the federal budget all directed funding for national education programs (including NWP, Reading is Fundamental, Teach for America, and the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards). Noting the contrast between Chicago's two professional sports teams—the NBA Bulls, who won six national championships in the 1990s, and the MLB Cubs, who hold a historic 103-year championship drought—NWP's executive director Sharon Washington noted, "It is easy to be part of something when times are good."

"It is absurd to imagine that any child will be able to earn a living, let alone contribute to resolving our complex problems, without knowing how to read and write. My foundation supports the National Writing Project so that teachers can be more effective in their efforts to improve literacy for all students."

—Isabel Allende

Financial supporter of NWP

Effective Educator Development (SEED) program. In November, NWP submitted a funding proposal aligned with SEED's "absolute priority" of "professional development/enhancement of teachers of English language arts with a specific focus on writing." We will know in spring whether NWP's proposal will be funded. If it is, the Minnesota Writing Project (MWP) will be able to apply for some of those funds.

Currently, Congress is working on the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act and the fiscal 2012 budget. The Senate version of the budget proposes a 5% set-aside of Title II funds for "programs of national significance" like NWP, but the House version eliminates even the current 1% set-aside. Clearly, the contested atmosphere in Washington continues, so our advocacy for NWP and MWP must also continue. **Contact your senators and representatives** to let them know that support for NWP directly benefits teachers and students in Minnesota. You can keep track of the evolving federal budget discussions and access a fuller description of the SEED grant program at **NWP Connect**.

In addition to submitting proposals on Capital Hill, NWP has ramped up fundraising to seek investment from individuals, corporations, and foundations. Novelist Isabel Allende has become a powerful voice for NWP, declaring, "It is absurd to imagine that any child will be able to earn a living, let alone contribute to resolving our complex problems, without knowing how to read and write. My foundation supports the National Writing Project so that teachers can be more effective in their efforts to improve literacy for all



Kirsten (on the right) with our own Candance Doerr-Stevens and Chuck Jurich from the New Mexico Writing Project

Despite the "bad" of this particular political moment, NWP's leaders reminded us that writing remains high on the national education agenda and that we have many bipartisan supporters in Congress, who share our commitment to high quality teacher professional development. Although direct funding has been eliminated, Congress has created a competitive funding stream with a 1% set-aside of Title II funds: the Supporting

students.” Private gifts and grants help fill the gap created by cutting direct federal funding and, perhaps ironically, help to convince the government that NWP is worth funding.

In this competitive funding environment, NWP will need to rely more on research and evaluation studies that show how investment in teacher development improves student performance. NWP has developed a solid base of evidence with their eight-year **Local Site Research Initiative**, but we also appreciate learning more about your local school/district assessment and evaluation efforts. Please contact Muriel Thompson directly at murielt@umn.edu or 612.625.6323 to share your local knowledge and to become more involved in MWP advocacy.



Ceiling medallion from the Hilton Chicago
(Photo: Candance Doerr-Stevens)

Supporting MWP

The Minnesota Writing Project no longer collects individual membership fees. Instead, we ask that those interested in supporting our efforts donate to our University of Minnesota Foundation Account (Fund #6464). This shift from membership fees to foundation support makes your gift fully tax deductible. For more information, visit our website at <http://writing.umn.edu/home/giving.html#mwp>



MWP Digital Workshop:

Creating student-centered, collaborative learning opportunities with technology

This week-long digital writing workshop will focus on the affordances of several digital tools (including Google, iMovie, Comic Life, Ning, PB Works, and more) for

- audio
- conversion
- drawing
- images
- mapping
- presentation
- research
- slideshow
- video

Formal composition and argumentation will also be addressed. Through the exploration of these tools, teachers will receive and develop lesson plans that meet Minnesota Academic Standards for English Language Arts K-12 (2010) in media literacy for both consumption and production of print, digital, and multimodal media.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:
Minnesota Writing Project
Phone: 612-625-6323
Email: mwp@umn.edu

When: Monday, June 18, 2012 through Friday, June 22, 2012 (8:30 a.m.- 3:30 p.m.)

Location: 15 Nicholson Hall, University of Minnesota

Cost: \$350 (CEUs available)

Registration Deadline: June 1, 2012 (Limited Enrollment)

Make checks payable to: University of Minnesota

Mail to: Minnesota Writing Project, U of M, 10 Nicholson Hall, 216 Pillsbury Drive, S.E., Minneapolis, MN 554

Name _____
Home Address _____
City, State, Zip _____
Phone _____
Email _____
School/District _____
Courses/Grades Taught _____

MWP TCs Lead Summer Youth Programs Focusing on Literacy

Summer 2011 marked the beginning of a new partnership between the University of Minnesota Sports and Recreation Program and the Minnesota Writing Project. The partnership offers new opportunities for teachers to design their own day camps, working with Twin Cities youth. Last year three youth programs were offered. TC Maria Theissen (ISI 2010) taught two sections of a camp titled “Digital Originals,” in which she worked with elementary students as they wrote and composed multimodal poetry online using VoiceThread. Due to the popularity of last summer’s camp, Maria will offer the same camp again this summer along with a non-fiction version, titled “Campus Eyewitness News,” in which students will roam the campus with flip cameras to capture and report the news.



Students creating Storigami

Another youth camp offered last year was taught by TC Christine VeLure Roholt (ISI 2003). Christine describes the camp writing adventures:

Jumping frogs, flying airplanes, and floating boats were just a few of the folded wonders that contributed to our week of origami class in early July. Students developed their own Storigami by putting words on each fold of an origami shape until the final shape (and story) emerged. We celebrated the Japanese festival Tanabata (Festival of Star Crossed Lovers) on July 7th by decorating large tree branches with origami and tanzuku (papers with personal wishes for the year). As in Japan during the festival, students could hang the Tanabata out on the night of July 7 and their written wishes would come true, just as the wish of Hikoboshi (the star known as Altair) and Orihime (the star known as Vega) comes true in their reunification once a year as they cross in the sky. At the end of the week students picked five origami shapes they wanted to learn to fold and then created a story and illustrated it with their origami shapes. Fabulous folding masters emerged!



Students displaying their Storigami

For more information on this year’s youth camp offerings, visit [University of Minnesota Summer Youth & Community Programs](#).



Students relaxing in front of Jones Hall

Teacher Showcase:

Much of what we read in the local education section of the newspaper describes shifting test scores or school closings. It is infrequent that we are offered a peek into the minds and hearts of teachers. Starting in January 2012, the front page of the Minnesota Writing Project website will feature Teacher Consultants (TCs) from the MWP, giving them a chance to speak their mind about the teaching of writing and the need for quality professional development. Please visit [our homepage](#) to meet these teachers and hear their perspectives.



Zachariah at the 2011 ISI

Zachariah Prowell

Grade: 3rd

School: Highlands Elementary

Teacher website: www.mrprowell.com

Summer Institute Writing: “Cycling Pedaled Thoughts” and “Dylan’s Diner”

Summer Institute Demonstration: [Revision through Modeling Clay \(.pdf file\)](#)

Reflections on teaching:

How has the MWP experience impacted your teaching?

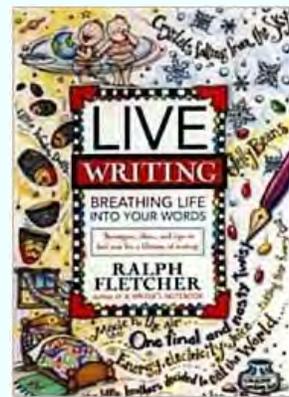
MWP opened my eyes to a world I never thought of as a typical writing experience. I grew up thinking I could not change the attitudes of many of my reluctant 3rd grade writers, and now I look forward to sharing how vast the world of writing can be for them.

What are your beliefs about writing?

Writing is an opportunity to help students not only capture a moment, but also explore the meaning of it and even create moments.

What is a book on writing or the teaching of writing that you would recommend (and why)?

Ralph Fletcher’s *Live Writing: Breathing Life into Your Words* (all of his books are wonderful). Being an elementary teacher, I find the tips and tools very applicable and full of ways to connect it to my students’ lives. With all the dry textbook resources out there, his style of writing is fun to read.



Visit Us on Facebook!

The Minnesota Writing Project has recently started a Facebook page to make it easier to access information about upcoming events and local resources for writing and teaching.



Most recently we posted information on the upcoming literary podcast series, “You are Hear.” Hosted by local writer Brian Beatty, the series will feature spoken works from local Minnesota artists.

[Visit our Facebook page](#) and “Like” us to keep nourished by these local tidbits.

Minnesota Writing Project offers Writing / Teaching / Learning

an Open Institute for Teachers



When?

July 16 to 20, 2012
Monday to Friday
9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Where?

Nicholson Hall
University of Minnesota
Minneapolis East Bank Campus

Who?

Teachers in all

- grade levels
- content areas
- experience levels
(including past
Invitational Summer
Institute participants)

The MWP Open Institute will be a workshop, not a traditional class. In it you will focus on three areas:

Writing

You will reflect on your own writing processes as you write, share your writing, and participate in a community of writers. Writing groups will meet several times during the week.

Teaching

You will consider the theory and practice of writing instruction that helps students achieve their potential as writers. Demonstrations and discussions of successful practice will be offered.

Learning

You will examine a current literacy issue of personal or school-based interest.

Such areas might include

- Implementing writers workshops
- Investigating digital writing options
- Designing effective writing assignments
- Using mentor texts
- Creating assessment tools
- Working with struggling writers/readers
- Embedding writing in the content areas

Registration

The fee for individuals taking this workshop will be \$350. Because teachers are encouraged to attend as a team, a 20% discount will be offered for multiple registrations from a school/district.

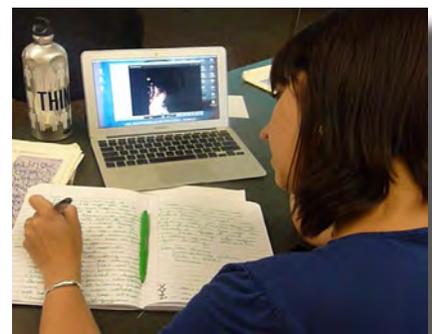
Since this is an interactive workshop, registration is limited to 25. If you wish to register, please complete the Open Institute Registration form at writing.umn.edu/mwp/open.

Credit

One graduate credit is available for participants who complete the course and pay an additional fee. Details of the cost and payment arrangements will be given at the time of registration.

For more information

Contact mwp@umn.edu.



Registration form

Minnesota Writing Project offers

Writing / Teaching / Learning

an Open Institute for Teachers

Name _____

Email _____

School/District _____

Phone _____

Home Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Courses/Grades Taught _____

(Please complete a registration form for each person.)

Payment:

1 teacher @ \$350 _____

_____ teachers @ \$280/teacher _____
(20% team discount)

Amount enclosed: \$ _____

Make checks payable to: University of Minnesota

Mail form and payment to:

Minnesota Writing Project
University of Minnesota
10 Nicholson Hall
216 Pillsbury Drive S.E.
Minneapolis, MN 55455

Who?

Teachers in all

- grade levels
- content areas
- experience levels (including past Invitational Summer Institute participants)

When?

July 16 to 20, 2012
Monday to Friday
9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Where?

Nicholson Hall
University of Minnesota
Minneapolis East Bank Campus



Announcements & Upcoming Events

Upcoming MWP Workshops

2012 Saturday Sessions

See the [flyer included in this newsletter](#) for more information. Email mwp@umn.edu for workshop openings.

Upcoming Summer Institutes

2012 Invitational Summer Institute

Please consider nominating a teacher from any discipline, K-college, who you think would benefit from and contribute to the literacy-based leadership experience of the summer institute. (Retreat June 27-28th & Institute July 9-27th.) [Nomination forms can be found here.](#)

2012 Open Summer Institute

This summer we will offer a week-long institute, open to teachers from any discipline, K-college, including those who have already attended the Invitational Summer Institute. Cost for the one-week institute is \$350, and it will be held July 16th-20th, 2012. See the [flyer](#) and [registration form](#) included in this newsletter for more information.

MCTE Spring Conference April 26-27

This year's Minnesota Council of Teachers of English conference will be held Thursday and Friday, April 26-27, in St. Cloud, Minnesota. See the [MCTE website](#) for more information.

David LaRochelle to Visit MWP in June 2012

Author David LaRochelle will be the guest presenter at this year's retreat for the 22nd Annual Invitational Summer Institute on Wednesday, June 27th, 2012. LaRochelle has written several books for children and young adults, including *Absolutely, Positively Not*, and his most recent picture book, *The Best Pet of All*. See [LaRochelle's website](#) for more information.



David LaRochelle

Save the Date:

3rd Annual Winter Writing Day
Saturday, March 24, 2012

Check the [MWP News & Events webpage](#) for updates

Congratulations to MWP TC Marie Hansen

Teacher Consultant (TC) Marie Hansen (ISI 2011) recently received the Minnesota Council of Teachers of English Leadership Development Award. Marie teaches English and theater arts at Burnsville High School.



Marie Hansen receiving her award at the National Council of Teachers of English Conference in Chicago

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2011-2012

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